

Message Text

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ACTION A-01

INFO OCT-01 NEA-07 ISO-00 H-03 SS-15 NSC-06 /033 W
-----066559 211657Z /47

P R 211050Z AUG 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6643
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 1749

JIDDA FOR CODEL

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP (SIKES, ROBERT AND FLYNT, JOHN)
SUBJECT: VISIT OF CODEL SIKES

REF: (A) BAGHDAD 1703, (B) BAGHDAD 1613

1. SUMMARY: CONDEL SIKES DID NOT MEET WITH IRAQI OFFICIALS DURING ITS SHORT STAY IN BAGHDAD. WE WILL PROBABLY NEVER KNOW WHY, BUT THE APPOINTMENTS FAILED TO MATERIALIZE AT THE LAST MINUTE. IT WAS PROBABLY DUE TO BUREAUCRATIC PROBLEMS MORE THAN AN INTENTIONAL SLIGHT BUT NONETHELESS LEFT AN UNPLEASANT ATMOSPHERE. BOTH THE CONGRESSMEN AND USINT ARE ANNOYED AND DISAPPOINTED. END SUMMARY.

2. AS REPORTED REFTELS, OUR DIPLOMATIC NOTES, VISITS AND PHONE-CALLS FAILED TO PRODUCE A FIXED TIME FOR APPOINTMENTS FOR REPRESENTATIVES SIKES AND FLYNT BEFORE THE MFA CLOSED ON FRIDAY, THE 18TH. LAST-MINUTE ARRANGEMENTS ARE NOT UNUSUAL HERE, AND WE WERE HOPEFUL THAT ON THE 19TH THINGS WOULD FALL MORE OR LESS INTO PLACE.

3. THE MORNING OF AUGUST 19, THE DAY OF THE CODEL'S ARRIVAL, WAS SPENT IN FRUITLESS EFFORTS TO CONTACT THE MFA PERSONNEL WITH WHOM THE VISIT HAD BEEN DISCUSSED (AL-ANBARI
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OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL DIVISION AND KHATEEB OF PROTOCOL). EVERYONE WAS OUT OF THE BUILDING BECAUSE OF THE FUNERAL OF THE IRAQI DIPLOMAT THAT HAD BEEN ASSASSINATED IN TRIPOLI A FEW DAYS BEFORE, AND IT WAS NOT UNTIL SHORTLY BEFORE COB (FOR THE MFA) THAT I WAS ABLE TO REACH ZAHAWI (FIRST INTERNATIONAL DIVISION).

4. ZAHAWI WAS JUST BACK FROM LEAVE AND SAID HE HAD NEITHER HEARD OF THE VISIT NOR SEEN OUR TWO NOTES ON THE SUBJECT. I TOLD HIM WE HAD TALKED TO AL-ANBARI ABOUT IT, AND LEARNED TO MY SURPRISE THAT AL-ANBARI WAS ON LEAVE. ZAHAWI PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER AND CALL BACK, WHICH HE DID SHORTLY THEREAFTER.

5. ACCORDING TO ZAHAWI, ACTING FONMIN ALWAN HAD BEEN INFORMED THAT THE CODEL WAS COMING NEXT MONTH AND HAD ACCORDINGLY DEFERRED A DECISION ON RECEIVING THEM UNTIL THE RETURN OF FONMIN HAMMADI. I ASKED ZAHAWI IF IT WERE STILL POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE A MEETING, POINTING OUT THAT WE HAD ONLY THE MORNING OF THE 20TH TO WORK WITH. SHOULD THAT FAIL, THEN A MEETING WITH HIM IN PLACE OF ALWAN, RATHER THAN AFTERWARDS AS WE HAD REQUESTED, WAS PERFECTLY ACCEPTABLE. ZAHAWI TOLD ME TO CALL HIM AT NINE A.M. ON THE 20TH.

6. THAT EVENING, WHEN CONGRESSMEN SIKES AND FLYNT AND MAJOR ALEXANDER ARRIVED, PROTOCOL HAD A MAN AT THE AIRPORT AND HAD ARRANGED FOR THE VIP LOUNGE TO BE USED. THEY LAID ON A SPECIAL BUS TO BRING THE CODEL IN FROM THE AIRPLANE, AND PERMITTED ME TO BE AT THE FOOT OF THE RAMP, WITH THE MAN FROM PROTOCOL, WHEN THEY DEPLANED. INA HAD A NEWSMAN IN THE LOUNGE TO ASK A FEW VERY SIMPLE QUESTIONS (THE ANSWERS WERE PROVIDED BY CONTROL
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OFFICER CROCKER IN ARABIC), AND A VEHICLE HAD BEEN PROVIDED FOR TRANSPORTATION TO THE RESIDENCE. ALL SEEMED TO BE IN ORDER.

7. AT 8:45 A.M. ON THE 20TH, SOMEONE IN PROTOCOL TELEPHONED OUR SENIOR FSL AND TOLD HER THAT BOTH ALWAN AND ZAHAWI WOULD BE UNABLE TO ARRANGE THEIR SCHEDULES TO SEE THE CONGRESSMEN. THE MESSAGE WAS TO BE PASSED TO ME WITH REGRETS THAT THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY OF A MEETING.

8. THE CODEL WAS BOTH DISAPPOINTED AND SOMEWHAT ANNOYED. THEY CONSIDERED EXTENDING THEIR STAY IN ORDER TO MAKE ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO ARRANGE MEETINGS, BUT AIRLINE SCHEDULES AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER REBUFF DECIDED THEM AGAINST IT. THEY DEPARTED AS PLANNED WITH PROTOCOL IN ATTENDANCE AND A SPECIAL BUS ARRANGED, BUT WITH UNPLEASANT MEMORIES OF IRAQ AND A FEELING OF DEPRESSION SHARED BY USINT.

9. COMMENT: THERE HAVE BEEN ENOUGH EXAMPLES OF LAST-MINUTE FLAPS OVER VISAS AND VISITORS (27 GUITARIESTS, TRADE MISSIONS) TO INDICATE THAT THE GOI DOES NOT ALWAYS FUNCTION SMOOTHLY WHEN THE U.S. IS INVOLVED. THE AIRPORT

EFFORTS MADE BY PROTOCOL LEAD US TO BELIEVE THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN INTENTION TO RECEIVE THE CODEL AT AN APPROPRIATE MFA LEVEL. THE PROBLEM MAY WELL HAVE RESULTED FROM AN INABILITY TO FIND SOMEONE WILLING TO AUTHORIZE A MEETING WITH CONGRESSMEN - AS OPPOSED TO A MORE ROUTINE VISITOR FROM THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH, FOR EXAMPLE - PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE INTEREST SUCH A MEETING WOULD BE CERTAIN TO GENERATE HERE.

10. ON BALANCE, WHILE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THERE WAS A CONSCIOUS DECISION NOT TO RECEIVE THE CODEL CANNOT BE ENTIRELY DISCOUNTED, I TEND TO THINK THAT THE MFA WAS UNABLE TO GET ITS ACT TOGETHER IN TIME. WE HAVE SEEN IT BEFORE, AND ARE AWARE OF THE SPECIAL SENSITIVITY
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THAT ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY APPEARS TO PRODUCE. I BELIEVE THEY JUST WERE NOT SURE WHAT TO DO, AND SO DID NOTHING.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BAGHDA01749
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780341-0505
Format: TEL
From: BAGHDAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780840/aaaabgrc.tel
Line Count: 140
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4908dd5f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION A
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BAGHDAD 1703, 78 BAGHDAD 1613
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1669890
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT OF CODEL SIKES
TAGS: OREP, IZ, (SIKES, ROBERT), (FLYNT, JOHN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4908dd5f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014